



State and Society: Indigenous Practices in Ritual and Religious Activities of Bali Hinduism in Bali-Indonesia

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Abstract

Due to the increased tourism development in Bali, there have been significant changes in Balinese views in the practices of their ritual and religious lives. Previously populated almost exclusively by Hindu Balinese, Bali has evolved to be a multicultural society resulting from the increased migration of people, ethnicities and ideas. In the past, any ritual and religious activities in accordance with the humanistic religious management had been carried out in the traditional kingdoms. However, the downfall of those traditional kingdoms has affected the emergence of significant issues in relation to who will be in charge in the ritual and religious activities that demand much financial outlay. This has brought about important issues in relation to the decrease in the Balinese who adhere to Hinduism, since most of them have no time to arrange these kinds of activities as most work in the tourist sector that demands effectiveness and efficiency. There are many questions to be discussed in this paper, namely, Firstly: What is the role of the state and society in the management of the ritual and religious activities in Bali? Secondly: What kinds of alternative solutions can solve the problems? And, Thirdly: How can these issues faced by the Balinese, be managed, since the Balinese do not only consist of followers of the Hindu religion but also other religions such as Islam, Christianity (Protestant and Catholic), Buddhism and Confucianism as well as the local beliefs that have been recognized by the state in the Reform period since 1998? Through answering these questions, it is expected to have a better understanding of the role of the state and society in the context of indigenous practices in Ritual and Religious Activities of Bali Hinduism in Indonesia.

Keywords: *indigenous practices, ritual and religious activities, Balinese Hinduism, society and state.*

I. Introduction

Bali is a province of the Indonesian archipelago with most of the people residing there Balinese; the majority

of them Hindu, with a culture much influenced by the Indian or Indic culture. This, however, does not mean that the Hindu religion in Bali is the

same as in India, since the process of Hinduisation or Indianisation was rooted there over a long period of history. As well, it is clear that there is still the previous culture which was extant before the coming of Indianisation or Hinduisation, called the indigenous Balinese culture or the *Bali Aga*, *Bali Asli Mula* or the *Bali Mula* as seen in the mountainous areas as Sidatapa in North Bali or the Buleleng district, the Tenganan and Trunyan villages and certain parts of eastern Bali.

The modern history of Bali in particular and Indonesian history in general, began in the sixteenth century, influenced by the arrival of the Islamic sultanates to the coastal areas of Java and Sumatra in the thirteenth century, though the first touch of Islamic influences had already started in the 7th to 8th centuries. It needed around 500 years from the time the first Islamic sultanate was established in the north part of Sumatra in 1292. Meanwhile, the Hindu kingdoms had also begun, for instance, in Majapahit in East Java, one year later. It seems that the social and religious and political concurrences had already lasted for a long time between the Hindu kingdoms and the Islamic sultanates. In the period of Majapahit in East Java, there developed the Hindu and Javanese culture which spread to eastern parts of the archipelago, namely, to Bali. It is said the Bali Hindu kingdom became strongest in

Gelgel Klungkung and due to its power, the Portuguese attack against it was unsuccessful in the year 1653.

From the above, it can be deduced that the process of globalization and modernization was taking place for a long time in Balinese history. Certain further questions, however, need to be discussed in accordance with significant aspects of the difficulties of the people of different ethnicities, religions and traditions living in Bali, in conducting the ritual and religious activities in Bali in particular and in Indonesia in general. What was the real situation of the plural society in Bali during the long process of the development of the Balinese culture in accordance with the concepts of a multicultural society?

How can the Balinese respond to any foreign influences in order to be able to maintain their Balinese culture in terms of ritual and religious activities? How can we understand the acceptability of the Balinese in facing the issues regarding the ritual and religious activities in Bali? And also, what do the Balinese hope for regarding the implementation of the government policy, the role of the Balinese entrepreneurs and other stakeholders in Balinese society in which they perceive that they really need to preserve their culture by simplifying the ritual and religious practices in modern Balinese society?

In order to be able to understand these questions it is important to look

at what is happening in Balinese daily life in which the people perceive that though they understand that the Indian or Indic culture has strongly contributed to their culture, in fact they do not agree that those cultures should monopolize the local culture (social and cultural disobediences). This means that the local culture should live side by side without any uncontrolled influences so that those cultures should live in a peaceful and harmonious ways (Kahn 1995). However, this cannot easily be solved since there are many factors that link one to the other, such as, social, economic and political factors. Therefore, in order to be able to have a better understanding of the role of the Indonesian state and society, it is vital to look at the long process of the creation of a multicultural society through the migration and historical processes.

II. Local Culture, Indian or Indic Influences from the Modern Balinese Perspective

Before the arrival of the Indian or Indic culture in the Indonesian archipelago in the first century, most of the local kingdoms, including the Balinese, already had their own local culture. As we can see, many examples of local wisdom had already rooted over a long time of history in the archeological sites; not only in terms of negative ideas but also of positive ones.

It seems that the local people of Bali still really depend on their local

culture and not all aspects of the Indian or Indic culture have been adopted and adapted into the Balinese culture. Indeed, it can be understood why the Balinese in some respects, disagree with the “Indianization” taking place in certain matters such as the education of the young Balinese which in fact is expected to preserve their own local culture in facing many issues in the fast process of migration from outside regions to Bali.

Therefore, it can be said that social, economic and political changes play a major role in how the Balinese should preserve their own culture by identifying, mapping and negotiating amongst certain aspects regarding the

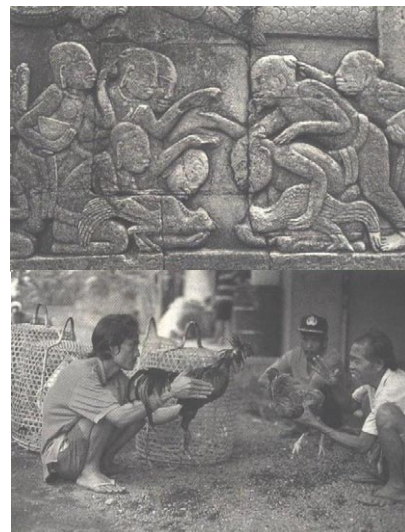


Image 1. Bass-relief (above) and cock fighting (below), the local culture of Balinese (source: Dahm and Ptak, 1999)

modern world (Ardhana and Maunati 2015).

III. Globalisation in the context of Ritual and Religious Activities

There are some arguments that note that there are strong roles for the sciences in the modern world. This can be understood in terms of the success story of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. Those sciences have a social function in the context of the modern world, particularly in technology.

This means that modern Balinese have begun to grasp how the Balinese culture should be implemented in the context of modern technology without losing any of the core content of ritual and religious activities such as *Dewa Yadnya* for Gods, *Manusa Yadnya* for man, *Butha Yadnya* for the unseen world, *Pitra Yadnya* for ancestors and *Rsi Yadnya* for priests. At this time, certain Balinese who are less *au fait* with such thinking have complained that they perceive the ritual and religious practices a burden for their lives and for those of their young generation. In the interviews with the Balinese in Denpasar city it was mentioned that the Balinese have financial problems regarding the conducting of the ritual and religious activities in 70.5% of cases with the lack of land as the main problem. For the Javanese of was more than 50%. We do need to have certain perspectives on these issues in which the Balinese argue about the lack of

local government, entrepreneurs and local Balinese who really care about the ritual and religious activities.

To elaborate on these issues, it is important to look at the concepts of the triple helix or civil society which have already emerged in developed countries and in Indonesia are called *masyarakat madani*. In this regard, we should look at the role of state and society in the concepts playing a major role in ritual and religious activities in Modern Indonesia in general and in Bali in particular.

The idea of state refers to the understanding of the Balinese ruling class or Balinese noblemen as ones who have had their central power in the Balinese palaces from the traditional to the modern times. In the context of the society or Balinese community, it is significant to see the Balinese community regarding their own adat regulations and the rights of the local people. It is argued that the civil society has a crucial role in accordance with the role of the traditional organizations like the Balinese *banjar* or hamlet that exists in every village. It is well known



Image 2. The *Bale banjar*, public hall in traditional Bali communities. (source: author's document)

that the banjar is the buffer to protect the people's existence against the local government (Eriksen 1993). In the past, particularity in the Old and New Orders in Indonesia, there have been two provinces that still strongly preserved the local adat communities, like Bali where most of the people are Hindu and the West Sumatran region called Minangkabau where most of the people are Muslim.

Both of these regions have their strong local adat or local regulations based on the traditions preserved from generation to generation. In Bali where not only the Balinese reside but also other ethnic groups such as the people from East Java and the Buginese who are Muslim (Maunati 2009), the people from East Nusa Tenggara, most of whom are Christians (Protestant or Catholic) and some Chinese most of whom are Buddhist or Confucianist.

There are several, different ethnic groups, traditions, languages and religions that exist in Denpasar as in other cities in Indonesia. The social and cultural formation cannot be separated from its long history, based on the formation of the nation during the traditional kingdoms, colonial era and the modern Indonesian state (Ardhana and Maunati 2013). Ardhana et al. (2018) note the coming of the Javanese in the past of Balinese history. In the modern times, it of course cannot be separated from Bali as one of the most successful in the world tourism industry,

the development of which, among others, Picard (1990 and 1997) analyses.

The construction of a multicultural society cannot be separated from its long history. The impacts of the Dutch colonial policy were the attraction of the Vreemde Oosterlingen or Orang Timur Asing such as the Arabs, the Indians and the Chinese to Denpasar. In addition to this, the classification of the Balinese society based on the aristocratic class, the middenstand and the common people influenced the complexity of the problems in Denpasar. The historical processes and migration have strongly affected the emergence of certain



Image 4. The gate of Muslim grave yard at Wanasari Denpasar

compounds like the Kampung Jawa, the Kampung Kapaon, the Kampung Benoa and the Kampung Arab.

Most of the Javanese in Kampung Jawa are Muslim. While the Balinese make up the majority of the population of Bali, the Javanese have their position in the second rank of Balinese society in terms of population in Denpasar. The Chinese at the third rank, made up around 2% of the population in 2010. The coming of the Chinese had already taken place in the Dutch colonial period. The Sasak people from Lombok,

have been in Bali for a long time. The ethnic relations between the Javanese, the Balinese and the Sasak people already existed during the Majapahit period in the 14th century and are even mentioned in the well-known book titled, *Negarakertagama* (Purwadi 2014).

Due to the lack of land for cemeteries for the Muslim communities in Bali, it is important to ask these communities about the possibilities of holding ritual and religious activities in Bali. Most of these people reside at the *banjar* levels but only the Javanese coming from East Java in Kampung Jawa already have their own compounds in Denpasar in particular and in Bali in general (For further explanation about *banjar* see, Staab 1997).

Based on the Denpasar statistics in 2017, the population in Denpasar was 897,300 (Badan Pusat Statistik, Kota Denpasar 2017), consisting of 458,300 men and 439,000 women. If we look at religion, it consisted of 417,593 Hindu and 154,009 Muslim, 31,355 Protestant, 15,129 Catholic and 14,911 Buddhist. There are many mosques, churches and Buddhist shrines in Denpasar including 125 temples, 28 mosques, 140 musholla, 5 Catholic churches, 86 Protestant churches and 11 Wihara. In this context, it seems that the local government has a good policy in terms of religious life in Denpasar (Ardhana 2014).

From the above statistics, it can be said that more than 70% of the people in

Denpasar have held ritual and religious activities. It is important to note that the significance of a communal place for ritual and religious activities was 97%. The analysis of the data shows that the role of local community was 31%, the palace 4.4 % and the local government 42%. In advance, the analysis shows that 94% of the respondents agreed to have a common place for religious activities. If we look at the opinion based on their different beliefs it can be said that 80% of the mixed religious believers agreed to have a shared place and 73.3% for common use.

V. Conclusion

The acceptability of the ethnic groups in ritual and religious activities

1. We recommend asking the local government to strengthen the education system for various religious institutions in accordance with ritual and religious activities.
2. The second recommendation is regarding the significant role of the local government, entrepreneurs and local communities in managing a plural society in the context of a peaceful and harmonious life.[]

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